(xii) Whistle boards-Speed breakers and road signs have been provided at unmanned level crossings and visibility for drivers has been improved.

(xiii) Audio-visual publicity campaigns to educate road users on how to make a safe crossing are conducted.

(xiv) Steps have been taken to prevent inflammable and explosive materials from being carried in passenger trains.

(xv) Periodic Safety Audit of different divisions by interdisciplinary teams from zonal headquarters has been introduced.

(xvi) Training facilities for drivers, guards and staff connected with train operation have been modernized including use of simulators for training of drivers.

(xvii) Refresher courses are regularly organized at specified intervals.

(xviii) Performance of the staff connected with train operations is being constantly monitored and those found deficient are sent for crash training.

(xix) Periodical safety drives are conducted to inculcate safety consciousness among the staff.

Poor Quality of Food in Trains

263. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the food served in running trains is not of good quality and the vendors roam about freely on the running trains and because of that there are a lot of thefts; and

(b) whether Ministry would take cognizance of these facts and improve the food, specially on long distance trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

Railways have taken a number of steps to improve catering services in running trains. These include standard meals served in hygienically packed casseroles, use of branded products and use of- eco-friendly material for serving beverages, curd etc. Special drives are launched from time to time to ensure this.

As regards thefts of passenger belongings, the reported cases are registered and investigated by the Government Railway Police, which function under the control of the State Governments concerned.

Unauthorised hawking and vending in the trains and railway premises are punishable offences. Railways conduct surprise and regular checks with the help of Government Railway Police and Railway Protection Force to curb the menace.

Clearance for Rail Projects

264. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of rail projects received for clearance during the last two years and the current year, State-wise; and

(b) the action taken on each project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) Proposals for railway projects are received from State Governments, Representatives of the Public, Chambers of Commerce, etc. by the Railways. These are examined in detail and are processed for approval, as per the requirements of traffic and safety, keeping the availability of resources in view.

Clearances of the appropriate authorities have been obtained for the following railway projects in the last two years. (i.e. 1997-98 and